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For Immediate Release

COVID-19 cases spike in Monongalia County; up 61.7% in past five days

MORGANTOWN, WV (July 5, 2020) — Monongalia County has seen 100 new cases of COVID-19 since the morning of July 1, a 61.7% increase in diagnosed positive cases that now total 262. The number of new COVID-19 cases in the past five days accounts for 38.2% of all cases recorded in Monongalia County since the first positive case was announced on March 19.

“Monongalia County has seen a dramatic spike in COVID-19,” said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer. “Theses cases are from restaurants and bar staff, as well as gyms and fitness centers, vacations, barbecues and travel-related exposures.”

This has resulted in widespread community-acquired COVID-19 from not wearing masks and not practicing social distancing, Dr. Smith added.

“Things have been moving at breakneck speed,” Dr. Smith said. “The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health designates more than three cases at any given location as an outbreak, and currently, there are three officially designated outbreaks in Monongalia County, with at least that many unofficial outbreaks that have not yet been given an outbreak number.”

On Wednesday, July 1, there were 162 reported diagnosed cases in Monongalia County, accumulated since March 19. Since July 1, numbers began increasing significantly. Cases went up by four on July 1; 16 on July 2; 14 on July 3; 29 on July 4 and 37 on July 5. Also, there are additional cases expected to be confirmed.

On Sunday afternoon, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources released statewide COVID-19 case totals to be 3,335.

“Our staff is overwhelmed,” Dr. Smith said. “We are having difficulty in contacting all positive cases to notify them of the need for isolation, and we are falling behind in informing contacts who have been exposed and their need for quarantine.”

As Dr. Smith noted, “These are necessary steps intended to break the cycle of widespread infection.”

The largest numbers of positives are seen in the 20-30-year-old age group, Dr. Smith said.

Because of the spike in cases, Monongalia County Health Department (MCHD), which is now in week 15 of COVID-19 response, will be returning to a seven-days-a-week work schedule, Dr. Smith added.

It is vitally important that individuals wear masks in public, observe social distancing and wash hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap in order to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Individuals who are concerned that they have visited a location where cases have occurred should self-monitor for symptoms, which include shortness of breath, fever, dry cough, headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches and loss of smell.

“It is unreasonable to believe that this is nothing more than a flu, as hospitalizations are also increasing,” Dr. Smith said. “There are reports from across the country of young people sustaining heart disease and even death. We are asking people of the county to assist in reducing widespread illness by observing basic precautions.”

Also, MCHD needs additional contact tracers and is requesting that anyone who has been trained in this field who could provide volunteer services to please call 304-598-5100.

More information can also be found at MCHD’s COVID-19 web pages, monchd.org/covid-19, monchd.org/covid-19-guidance and monchd.org/covid-19-stats. They also can follow MCHD’s social media: Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and Instagram at #WVMCHD.